

HALL OF RECORDS
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS



1923—1924

**OFFICES
211 NORTH CALVERT STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND**

785729

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MARYLAND STATE BOARD
OF
MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

1923---1924

GEORGE HELLER
Chairman

ASA C. SHARP
Vice Chairman

MARIE WHITE PRESSTMAN
Secretary and Treasurer

HELEN L. ODOM
Chief Clerk

OFFICES
211 NORTH CALVERT STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Baltimore, Maryland

December 31, 1924

To the Honorable Albert C. Ritchie, Governor of Maryland:

The Maryland State Board of Censors respectfully begs to submit the following report of its activities for the year ending September 30, 1924.

Control of motion pictures, vested by law in this State in a Board of Censors, consisting of three members, has existed for a little over eight years. No other commercial amusement has so important a part in the recreational life of the community. The Legislature of Maryland, recognizing the fact that so vast a power for good or ill cannot be left to the mercies of commercialism, has by successive enactments created a Board, and conferred additional powers and duties upon it. (Chapter 209, Acts 1916; Chapter 309, Acts 1918; Chapter 651, Acts 1920, and Chapter 390, Acts 1922.) To keep a high standard of film showing, and at the same time to deal in all fairness with the interests involved, has been the policy of this Commission.

The Board of Censors has effected its purposes, as far as possible, by consultation and co-operation with those whose financial interests are concerned. When a film has been found totally or partially unfit for exhibition, notification of the fact is promptly forwarded to the applicant. Accompanying the notice are the Board's reasons for the rejection, or if not rejected in toto, a list of eliminations or suggestions for reconstruction is attached to the order. The applicant has ninety days in which to file his appeal from such findings of the Board. During this period the film in question will be examined free of any additional charge, and in the presence of the applicant, his agent or representative. In some cases the Board's original orders have been modified, and

in other instances the film has been revised at the motion picture studios. The revised films are again reviewed by the Board and, if they conform to requirements, may be passed as reconstructed.

The fact that during the past year approximately one film in six was subject to eliminations or reconstruction, necessitates a large amount of follow-up work to ascertain if the Board's instructions are properly carried out in the original print and in the duplicates, if any. The Board, in some instances, reviews films after cuts are made. In these cases final orders are not issued until the Board feels satisfied that the instructions are understood and faithfully carried out. This follow-up work, as a rule, is done by the inspectors, four persons being employed for the purpose, the members of the Board occupying their time with the original examinations, and examinations on appeal.

During the past year 3,080 original films and 2,432 duplicates were presented to the Board for examination, comprising 9,348 reels of original film, and 6,290 reels of duplicates. These films are all examined on the screen, the original films by the censors at the office of the Board, and the originals and duplicates by inspectors sent to the theatres for the purpose of seeing that the orders of the Board are duly carried out. All theatres in the State are under this supervision. There are 194 theatres in Maryland, 95 being located in Baltimore City, and the remainder, throughout the State. A careful check on all city houses, including supervision of the colored houses, of which there are twelve (12) in Baltimore City, is maintained by the paid inspectors. The houses throughout the State are visited from time to time by the paid inspectors who travel for a month or more at a time. Assisting in the inspection in rural districts are volunteer inspectors who are appointed by the Board. All paid inspectors are under the State Merit System.

The report of films examined shows that 4,611 films were approved, 897 eliminated, and four (4) rejected. Of the

last, three were finally passed in a reconstructed form. It is to be borne in mind that the great majority of films presented for censorship in Maryland have already been reviewed by the National Board of Review in New York. This body has no legal control over the film producers, but by agreement they submit to the judgment of volunteer censors, aided, of course, by paid secretaries, the expense of such examination being borne by the producers. Many of the objectionable films are never brought to this State due to the existence of a Board which reviews films in advance of any public exhibition. Some of the producers revise their films for censorship States, which comprise but a limited area, including New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kansas, Virginia, Maryland and Florida. The last mentioned State has a statute which provides that any film approved by the New York Commission and the National Board of Review may be shown. In contrast we find the whole of Canada under a strict censorship, as indeed are England, India, Australia and the other British provinces. Some form of motion picture censorship exists in most of the countries of the civilized world.

Many of the municipalities in this country have regulation of motion pictures.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

On April 8th of the past year the Board met and adopted a revised set of rules and regulations in pursuance of Section 16 of the Act of 1922, Chapter 390. The changes were chiefly in respect to the issuing of substitute seals, which is an important part of the checking system adopted to keep all prints identified after censorship. During the past fiscal year the Board issued 1,317 of these seals, for which a fee of \$1.00 each is charged. Rule 6 requires more stringent regulations in respect to affidavits and detailed information from applicants for substitute seals, as various abuses had arisen from negligent use of such seals in the past.

Rule 11 was also revised, the Board requiring applicants for censorship, upon receipt of an order directing cuts, to agree in writing to make the same, and to further agree that all scenes and titles condemned in film be eliminated from all banners, posters and other like advertising matter. Appeals from any order of the Board may be taken before two or more members of the Board, with the right of a further appeal to the Baltimore City Court. No appeals to court from any findings of the Board were taken during the past year. Rules 8 and 10 deal with the question of changes, additions and eliminations made in film prior to or after censorship. Many films are revised before being submitted to the Board. It was found that an attempt would sometimes be made to replace eliminated scenes after the censor had reviewed a deleted film. The great difficulty in such cases is to obtain a record of the objectionable features of the original film in order to furnish inspectors with information for use in checking subsequent exhibitions of the film. It sometimes happens that the print presented is not the only film intended for exhibition in the State. There may be four or five additional prints in which no such changes or alterations were made as in the film screened for the censors. In the absence of any other data the inspector uses his own judgment in making reports, and an objectionable film may be recalled for re-examination by the Board. This right of recall, which has recently been inserted in the law, is only exercised in extreme cases, as it necessarily leaves the exhibitor without a film on which he has often expended a considerable amount of money in advertising. He frequently is unable to obtain any other booking for his night's show and must, therefore, close his house. Violations of this type have become rare, due to the constant supervision of the theatres.

A list of the Rules and Regulations as adopted is appended to this report.

The Board exchanges bulletins with other State Censors, including New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kansas and Vir-

ginia, and thereby keeps in touch with cuts made in these States.

The Board has kept a record of its meetings and its work, which is open for inspection at its offices.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's Report for the year, which is appended, shows receipts from reels censored amounting to \$24,986. From other sources, including the sale of substitute seals, \$1,352 was collected, making the total receipts from the Board's activities for the year, \$26,338. Expenditures for salaries and maintenance of the Board and its employees, including rent and traveling expenses, etc., amounted to \$20,730.44. A balance of \$5,607.56, was turned over to the State Treasurer after paying all expenses of the Board.

PROSECUTIONS

During the past year no wilful violations of the law were reported. This shows a marked improvement in law enforcement over previous years, due to the constant supervision of the theatres by paid inspectors. In the year 1920-1921, seventeen prosecutions were instituted, in fifteen cases fines being imposed. In 1922-1923, when for the first time the Board had a force of three paid inspectors, only five cases resulting in fines were instituted by the Board. During the past year, in the cases of such minor violations as were detected, the exhibitors were able to satisfy the magistrate that the omission to show the seal was not wilful, but due to the negligence of employees.

ATTENDANCE OF CHILDREN

The great popularity of the motion picture among children as well as adults is sufficient reason for some form of legalized control of the motion picture. Children form a large proportion (twenty to twenty-five percent) of the average

movie audience of today. Censorship cannot make all films suitable for children, although the obvious advantage of a careful supervision of films is apparent. The responsibility for the selection of films suitable for children is one of great importance. Many films are available which have great educational value, and at the same time provide clean and wholesome amusement in the form of comedies and children's dramas. The Board recommends that it would be well for schools, Parent and Teacher Associations, and others interested in child welfare, to co-operate in an effort to induce the motion picture houses to give more attention to special programs for children.

Respectfully submitted,

GEORGE HELLER, *Chairman*

ASA C. SHARP, *Vice-Chairman*

MARIE WHITE PRESSTMAN, *Secretary*

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

REPORT OF FILMS EXAMINED

October 1, 1923—September 30, 1924

	Films Original	Films Duplicate	Reels Original	Reels Duplicate	Films Approved	Films Rejected	Films Eliminated
October.	283	233	834	583	445	0	71
November.	236	149	643	400	349	0	36
December.	261	159	753	441	325	0	95
January.	249	184	739	514	355	0	78
February.	254	208	778	617	397	3	62
March.	255	189	841	535	361	0	83
April.	260	186	878	512	386	0	60
May.	285	211	903	486	389	1	106
June.	248	201	749	467	388	0	61
July.	258	240	726	558	438	0	60
August.	245	225	781	603	400	0	70
September.	246	247	723	574	378	0	115
	3,080	2,432	9,348	6,290	4,611	*4	897

*One film finally rejected—three passed in reconstructed form.:

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Films, Original.	3,080		
Films, Duplicate.	2,432		
Reels, Original.		9,348	
Reels, Duplicate.		6,290	
Films Approved.			4,611
Films Rejected.			4
Films Eliminated.			897
	5,512	15,638	5,512

Baltimore, November 29, 1924

Maryland State Board of Motion Picture Censors,

211 North Calvert Street,

Baltimore, Maryland.

Gentlemen:

This office has completed an audit of the books and accounts of the Maryland State Board of Motion Picture Censors, for the fiscal year ended September 30th, 1924, and found same to be correct.

I enclose herewith copy of a report showing receipts and disbursements of said office for the period named.

Yours very truly,

LEWIS M. MILBOURNE,

State Auditor

STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

For Fiscal Year Ended September 30th, 1924

Receipts

State Treasurer.....	\$20,342.94
State Comptroller.....	162.50
Fees, Original Reels, 9,348 at \$2.00.....	18,696.00
Fees, Duplicate Reels, 6,290 at \$1.00.....	6,290.00
Sale, Substitute Seals, 1,317 at \$1.00.....	1,317.00
Interest on Deposits.....	5.00
Telephone Calls Collected.....	30.50
	\$46,843.94

Disbursements

Operating Expenses:

Salaries and Wages (from Budget).....	\$15,749.50	
Salaries and Wages (from Receipts).....	225.00	
		\$15,974.50
Office Rent (Direct).....	\$1,787.50	
Office Rent (by Comptroller).....	162.50	
		1,950.00
Postage.....		50.00
Office Supplies and Stationery.....		77.09
Printing.....		208.75
Office Expense.....		98.61
Telephone and Telegraph.....		201.52
Miscellaneous Expenses.....		48.25
Office Equipment.....		93.45
Record Books.....		2.50
Traveling Expenses.....		437.98
Premium on Bonds.....		15.00
Light and Power.....		272.72
Machine Supplies.....		29.60
Repairs.....		32.97
Film Approval Seals.....		1,237.50
Remitted to State Treasurer.....		26,113.50
		\$46,843.94

RULES

ADOPTED BY THE

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

(In pursuance of Section 16 of the Act 1922, Chapter 390.)

1.—All persons desiring to submit films or views to the Board for examination must fill out the application blanks provided by the Board, giving title, date of release, number of reels, number of feet, whether original or duplicate, character of film, whether comedy, drama, news, etc., and name of manufacturer. Applications must be signed by an authorized agent or representative of the owner or lessor of the films or views to be examined.

2.—Applications must be accompanied by a check or cash covering full amount of censorship fee, and no films or views will be examined unless paid for in advance.

3.—All applications for the examination of duplicate prints must be made in the same manner and at the same time as applications for originals, otherwise they will be treated as originals and the full censorship fee of \$2.00 a reel charged, instead of \$1.00, as provided in the law for duplicates.

4.—Reels must be delivered to the Board at least two days in advance of date for their release in this State. Reels will be examined by the Board within twenty-four (24) hours after they are delivered at the office, whenever possible, and will be returned on the day after the examination, or on the same day, if practicable.

5.—All reels will be examined by the Board in the order in which they are received. Exception to this rule will be made only when application and fee have been received in

advance and a definite appointment has been made with the Board by the exchange manager or agent for the examination of a film.

6.—Substitute seals to replace approval seals lost or destroyed will be supplied on censored prints, to exchange managers, agents and other duly authorized persons, if applications are made on form provided for the purpose, giving title and serial number of film for which a new seal is desired and upon furnishing proof, to the satisfaction of the Board, that the said print is the *original censored print*, and that all *eliminations ordered*, if any, are *duly made*; and if perforations are missing, the Board will require an affidavit to the effect that the said print is the original censored print and that all eliminations ordered, if any, have been duly made. In the above case the Board, at its discretion, will re-perforate such prints free of charge. In case a censored print has been lost or destroyed, upon affidavit to that effect, made on form provided for the purpose, within a period of sixty (60) days after filing of original application for censorship, the Board, at its discretion, will perforate and issue seal on such print the same as on prints originally censored. Substitute seals will not be issued on any subject after a period of two (2) years has elapsed since the filing of original application for censorship, unless perforations are on film at the time.

7.—Substitute seals for use in the above cases will be supplied under the conditions specified at a cost of \$1.00 each. The Board will replace perforations, at its discretion, free of charge.

8.—All films or views must be presented to the Board as originally produced unless otherwise specified on the application. In case the print presented has been subject to eliminations or changes prior to examination, a list of the same must accompany the application, and the approval seal will be issued for the film as presented.

9.—Title of subject, name of manufacturer, and number of parts, as stated on application, must correspond to title, name of manufacturer and number of parts shown on screen.

10.—Any change of title, or any alteration or addition made to any film or view after it has been examined by the Board, must be submitted in writing for the approval of the Board, and if the change meets with the Board's approval, it will issue an order to this effect.

11.—No film or view shall be approved by the Board unless and until the person applying for such approval shall agree in writing to any eliminations which shall have been made by the Board, and shall certify in writing to the Board that such eliminations have been made, and shall further agree in writing that all scenes and titles condemned in film will be eliminated from all banners, posters, or other like advertising matter. Appeals from any order of the Board must be taken within ninety (90) days of receipt of notice of such order. After this period the Board will refuse to re-examine any film except upon payment of censorship fee of \$2.00 a reel.

12.—All trailers used as advance advertisements of uncensored films must be submitted to the Board before being exhibited in public. Trailers containing scenes approved in films are permitted.